United Nations A/53/PV.15

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Friday, 25 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Armenia, His Excellency Mr. Robert Kocharian, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kocharian (*interpretation from Russian*): May I begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your election as President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I am confident that the skills and vast experience you have acquired throughout your distinguished diplomatic career will provide the guidance we need to guarantee the successful outcome of the session. I must also recall the valuable contribution of your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, to the work of the last session of the General Assembly.

This year, 1998, has been a year of warning signals and signs of hope. We have witnessed both setbacks and strides forward in the quest for peace and international security. In particular, we have witnessed great progress towards the settlement of one of the longest and most intractable conflicts — that of Northern Ireland. The Irish peace agreement has proved to the world that it is never too late to find answers to seemingly impossible problems.

Unfortunately, wars, armed conflicts, acts of terrorism and other forms of violence have shaken the world during this last year and have had a negative impact on international stability and security.

A party to all international treaties in the sphere of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Armenia is deeply concerned about the possible consequences of nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan this year. We believe that as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) comes into force, it will contribute substantially to the strengthening of international security. Also, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, Armenia supports drafting agreements on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

The United Nations plays a great role in different aspects of international life, ranging from tackling global environmental problems to combating organized crime and illicit drug trafficking. In support of United Nations activities in these spheres, Armenia actively participated in the twentieth special session of the General Assembly.

98-85888 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We strongly believe that the illicit traffic in drugs and psychotropic substances seriously jeopardizes the economic prosperity and political stability of many countries and regions of the world.

Armenia also actively participated in activities leading to the establishment of the International Criminal Court, since we attach great importance to the battle against international crime, including the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Believing that the United Nations should play the leading role in the formation of an international anti-criminal strategy, Armenia supports the idea of holding, in Vienna, in the year 2000, the tenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders.

Armenia unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism as acts that have no justification on political, ideological, ethnic, religious or any other grounds. The recent terrorist attacks in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania once again show us the necessity for cooperation among all countries to combat that evil. We call for the accession of the maximum number of countries to universal conventions against terrorism, and support the Russian proposal on a United Nations convention for combating acts of nuclear terrorism. Armenia likewise supports including on the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly issues dealing with the declaration by the United Nations of a decade of international law, as well as events to be organized in 1999 devoted to the hundredth anniversary of the first International Peace Conference.

For the international community, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The semi-centennial anniversary of the Declaration enables the States Members of the United Nations to conduct a review of human rights conditions in their own countries and to identify ways further to develop the foundations of democracy and to promote human and national rights.

This year also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It is well known that the international community did not, at the time, duly condemn the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, and that failure encouraged certain regimes to commit new crimes of genocide. After the Holocaust, the United Nations addressed the problem of genocide, defining it as a crime against humanity, and adopted, on 9 December 1948, the aforementioned Convention. Despite that fact, over the past five decades, crimes of genocide have been committed in various parts of the world on more than one occasion. The recent recognition and condemnation by several parliaments of the genocide of Armenians committed early in this century is evidence of an increased understanding of the necessity to combat that evil.

The General Assembly, upon the submission of Armenia and five other Member States, included on the agenda of this session an item on the fiftieth anniversary of the genocide Convention. We hope that, by combining its efforts in the struggle against the crime of genocide, humanity will take a decisive step towards the elimination of that crime in the next century.

Equality and mutually beneficial cooperation among countries in the political and commercial-economic spheres, based on free market principles, should become an important factor for political stability in the third millennium. We have no other choice. Armenia adheres to this policy in all its dealings, from its approach to cooperation with international organizations to the process of becoming a member of the World Trade Organization.

We attach special significance to regional cooperation, be it in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organization or the TRASECA project. Armenia is sincerely open to such cooperation, although we have to state with regret that the blockade imposed on Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan is a serious obstacle to such cooperation. It is obvious that the region's vast potential cannot be fully exploited if attempts are made to isolate one of its constituents. Such attempts are doomed to failure.

Another factor of concern for political-military stability in the region is the gross violation by Azerbaijan of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. In three categories of ground equipment identified in the Treaty, our neighbour significantly surpasses the national limits set by the Treaty.

Despite the potential threat to our security, since the earliest days of our independence we have clearly and unambiguously forsworn the development of weapons of mass destruction and adhere to the principles of non-proliferation of such weapons and of control over the destabilizing accumulation of conventional arms.

The peaceful settlement of regional conflicts is one of the most important safeguards of stability and peace in

our region, the Transcaucasus. Armenia is committed to the ceasefire established in the Karabakh zone of conflict in May 1994 and will assist in its rigorous maintenance. We emphasize the contribution of the Minsk Group and of its individual member States, both to the maintenance of the ceasefire and to mediation.

Unfortunately, at present, the negotiation process is at an impasse. We believe that the main reasons for this impasse are the unclear definition of Nagorny Karabakh's status as a party to the negotiations; Azerbaijan's refusal to negotiate directly with the leaders of Nagorny Karabakh; and its insistence on preconditions regarding the future status of Nagorny Karabakh, which we believe must be negotiated. The international community must make every effort to overcome these obstacles.

In our opinion, given the intensity and specifics of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, its resolution demands unconventional approaches based on the principle of equal legal rights for the parties to the conflict, an end to the enclave status of Nagorny Karabakh and the provision of international security guarantees for its population. Armenia is ready to move forward and calls on Azerbaijan to resume negotiations without preconditions in order to reach a comprehensive settlement for the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

The challenges that the international community faces today are diverse and complicated. We are convinced that only a reformed United Nations can cope successfully and effectively with the increasing number of problems. This holds true especially for the reform of the Security Council, since the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world depends on a Security Council that functions effectively. We also call for deeper institutional reform of the United Nations, including in the administrative-budgetary sphere. We believe that the fulfilment by all Member States of their financial obligations under the United Nations Charter is indispensable if the Organization's acute financial crisis is to be overcome. Despite serious economic hardships, Armenia will fulfil its duties in this sphere. We need only recognize that a stronger and reformed United Nations serves our common interests.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Armenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clerides: I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of this body. I have no doubt that your diplomatic experience and proven leadership will guide us successfully in our work.

Allow me also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the determined leadership with which he steered the work of the fifty-second session.

The United Nations, being the primary vehicle for the pursuit of world peace, has striven throughout its existence to make the world a better place to live in. Despite adversities of all kinds, caused particularly by opposing national interests, violent conflicts, natural disasters and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the United Nations has pursued consistently the noble goals enshrined in its Charter, first and foremost the elimination of the scourge of war and the achievement of economic development.

To be realistic, however, the hopes of mankind for a new and genuinely just international legal and political order, generated by the demise of the bipolar world, are yet to be realized.

Cyprus reaffirms its commitment to work closely with the other members of the Organization for the attainment of our common goals. We support, therefore, the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi

Annan, to streamline the operations of the Organization in a way that assures its ability to pursue its goals, meet new challenges and safeguard its financial position. We stress once more the importance of restructuring the Security Council to make it more representative and transparent.

Cyprus welcomes the adoption of the Statute of a permanent International Criminal Court, empowering it to bring to justice the perpetrators of most serious crimes and violations of humanitarian law. In this respect, we consider the first-ever judgement by the international criminal court for Rwanda on the crime of genocide a very important step.

Of special concern is the rising number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Their plight calls not only for international cooperation in providing protection and humanitarian assistance, but also for addressing the root causes of displacement. We continue to believe that the best solution is the return of refugees to their homes in conditions of safety, with full protection of their human rights.

Cyprus condemns terrorism, which it considers a menace to humanity, requiring effective international action and solutions on the basis of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be characterized by lack of progress and obstacles to the implementation of the peace accords. The current stalemate poses a threat to the stability of the region. Cyprus, a neighbouring State with close relations to the parties involved, reiterates its support for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I would like to reiterate my country's support for the documents adopted at the General Assembly special session on the world drug problem and for the relevant efforts of the United Nations.

Cyprus welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Africa. His recommendations merit serious consideration and support by the international community. We believe that the international community should redouble its efforts towards assisting African countries, with special attention given to debt relief, so that they can avoid further instability and the danger of marginalization.

Cyprus joined in the worldwide rejoicing over the agreement of last April concerning Northern Ireland. It is important for the sides to honour their responsibilities and meet their commitments. We condemn acts of violence, which should not be allowed to block the road to peace, reconciliation and prosperity.

Cyprus supports strongly the efforts in the area of arms control and disarmament. Since my last appearance before this body, we have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention; we have also signed, and will soon ratify, the Convention on anti-personnel mines. I should emphasize in this respect that, in spite of the difficult situation we face because of the presence of an occupation army force of 36,000 troops, Cyprus has decided to sign the Convention as an expression of our determination to join the forces struggling to eliminate this utterly cruel method of war. We are grateful to Canada for promising to finance the undertaking to clear the minefields along the ceasefire line in our country.

The United Nations has a special role to play in the promotion of the well-being of small States. Small States are often exposed to a much greater degree than larger States to threats because of increased vulnerability of their environment and security.

In this connection, Cyprus has suffered for more than 24 years the grave consequences of the Turkish invasion and the continuing occupation of more than one third of its territory. Despite the pronounced will of the international community through numerous resolutions and the willingness of the Greek Cypriot side to negotiate in good faith, no solution of the Cyprus problem has resulted. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask why. The answer is: It is because of the non-implementation and flagrant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions by Turkey.

I feel that it is necessary to give some examples of these flagrant violations which prevented solution of the Cyprus problem. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and non-recognition of the Turkish Cypriot breakaway entity were violated by Turkey, which is the only State which recognized the Turkish Cypriot secessionist entity, and which sustains it financially and militarily.

As regards Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, calling for the speedy withdrawal of all foreign armed forces and personnel from the Republic of

Cyprus, not only have the Turkish armed forces and personnel not been withdrawn, but they have been increased and upgraded, to such an extent that the previous Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, described in his report to the Security Council the occupied area of Cyprus as one of the most militarized areas in the world.

United Nations resolutions for the return of the refugees to their homes under conditions of safety were not implemented, not only because Turkish forces prevented the refugees from returning, but also because Turkey, violating other provisions of United Nations resolutions calling on all parties concerned to avoid any action to change the demographic composition of the population of Cyprus, imported to Cyprus thousands of illegal settlers from Turkey, usurped the properties of the refugees and installed settlers in them. I could go on giving examples of gross violations of United Nations resolutions by Turkey, but in order to confine myself to the time limits allowed, I will refer only to the latest violation.

The recent demand of the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktaş, in the presence of the Turkish Foreign Minister, violates all United Nations resolutions, which call for a bizonal-bicommunal federation, with a single sovereignty, international personality and citizenship, and is aimed at derailing the negotiating process from the base of the United Nations resolutions on Cyprus, and also at extinguishing the independence of the Republic of Cyprus and creating, under the guise of a Turkish Cypriot Republic, a Turkish colony in Cyprus or, to say the least, a Turkish protectorate.

The non-implementation of United Nations resolutions on Cyprus tarnishes the image of the United Nations and its main bodies. The former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in one of his reports to the Security Council, identified as a cause of the absence of progress in Cyprus the lack of political will on the part of the Turkish side.

With that report the diagnosis of the causes of the failure to make progress towards a solution is completed. Is it too much for the people of Cyprus to ask what the next step will be? Will the United Nations finally take the necessary action to apply the required remedy in order to put an end to the tragedy that has befallen our small State and that has continued for 24 years?

The international community should not allow one State to violate for so long its expressed will. The Security Council, the main organ for international peace and security, should proceed to examine how to implement its resolutions as soon as possible.

I now want to address the problem of Cyprus, not by looking at the past, but by outlining my goals for the future. The Cyprus problem has been with us for over 40 years. Today, the two communities of Cyprus are led by the generation that was involved in the earliest stages of the Cyprus problem. This generation knows both the joys of friendships that crossed communal lines and the tragedies and suffering that also crossed communal lines.

Rauf Denktaş and I are both members of this generation, which has seen the best and the worst of the recent history of Cyprus. Our communities have entrusted us with their respective leaderships. The people of Cyprus, both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, look to us, their leaders, to help shape a future that is better than the present and that will not allow for a repetition of the past.

Let me offer my vision for the future. I want all Cypriots to have security in their homes and their communities; I want all Cypriots to pursue their livelihoods free of economic restrictions and the fear of instability; I want all Cypriot children to know their distinct cultural and religious heritage and to be able to carry their identity and political rights into the future without fear of domination from any quarter.

The solution to any constitutional problem on the basis of communal or ethnic criteria and federalism contains elements of partnership and political equality of the constituent parts.

The solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of a bicommunal-bizonal federation requires such a partnership of the two communities as would constitutionally provide for a maximum degree of internal self-administration for the two constituent cantons, provinces or States, and, adhering to the principle of the equal political status of the constituent parts, it must provide them with the same rights, powers and functions regarding their respective separate, internal self-administration. The constitution must also provide for effective participation of the constituent parts in the federal government. It must also secure all fundamental human rights and freedoms for all the citizens of the federation. Above all, it must safeguard the single sovereignty, the indivisibility and the unity of the bicommunal-bizonal federation. Such a federation,

becoming a member of the European Union, will thrive at home and abroad.

One of the questions we should ask when looking at various ideas for a solution is: Do they reasonably meet the needs of the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots, and will they promote stability and encourage cooperation and partnership among the people of Cyprus?

It is obvious that a bicommunal solution must be negotiated, not only because all United Nations resolutions so demand, but also because only in negotiations can we work out the practical steps needed to realize a functioning solution.

Security for both communities is a fundamental part of any settlement; this will require arrangements special to Cyprus. To be effective, an agreement to this end must produce a settlement that can meet the real life challenges inherent to a small island State.

I believe that the gap between what ordinary Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots want and need in a settlement is not so great as it might appear. Both want the same things: peace, prosperity, stability and physical, political, economic and cultural security, including respect for and enjoyment of their homes and properties.

I am confident that, working together under the umbrella of the United Nations and with the help of the international community, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can construct a settlement that meets these needs and removes the fears and insecurities that have plagued Cyprus since the middle part of this century. To do this, we must begin serious negotiations.

I believe that we, the current generation of leadership, must negotiate a settlement to our decades-old problem that will give all the people of Cyprus a future that will ensure that the bitter experiences of the past cannot and shall not be repeated. We, the older generation of both communities, must close this sad chapter of Cyprus's history with an agreement between us which will allow generations to come to build and realize the fruits of true partnership, based on mutual respect and political understanding.

While we cannot reconcile ourselves with the Turkish invasion and occupation, we are genuinely determined to renew and invigorate bicommunal confidence and trust, cooperation and interaction with our Turkish Cypriot compatriots. In my investiture speech last February, I extended a hand of friendship and urged the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktaş, to join me in working together towards finding a solution to the tragic problem of Cyprus for the benefit of all the citizens of the island. Similarly, I invited the Turkish Cypriots to participate as full members in the Cypriot delegation negotiating the accession of Cyprus to the European Union, thus shaping together our positions and common destiny.

Today, before the representatives of the international community and from the podium of this Assembly, adhering to the will of the international community for an agreed solution to the Cyprus problem within the parameters set forth in United Nations resolutions, as leader of the Greek Cypriot community, I renew my invitation to the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Rauf Denktaş, to work together for the solution of the Cyprus problem in order to build a happy and prosperous island for our children and future generations. The interests of Cyprus lie in the unity and interaction of the two communities. The continuing tension prevents Cyprus and its people from assuming their rightful role and making their contribution to regional stability and the improvement of Greco-Turkish relations.

The Government of Cyprus is committed to a peaceful solution, on the basis of the United Nations resolutions, which will safeguard the interests and the human rights of all its citizens.

We have consistently put forward proposals for the reduction of tension on the island.

Tension in Cyprus escalates because of the massive presence of the Turkish occupation forces in the north, their continuous strengthening and upgrading, and the corresponding need the Government of the Republic feels to strengthen its defences.

The Security Council, recognizing that the increase in tension is due to the build-up of military forces, has called in a number of its resolutions for the reduction of forces and armaments.

While the Government of the Republic of Cyprus will continue to exercise its sovereign right to strengthen its defences with whatever means it considers necessary for as long as Turkish occupation forces remain in Cyprus, I have not failed, in response to Security Council resolutions, to suggest concrete ways and measures to work for a specific programme of reduction of foreign and local forces and equipment as a necessary

preparatory step for the programmed and final withdrawal of all foreign forces and other elements and for the demilitarization of Cyprus. These proposals and suggestions, on our part, are still valid and timely, and as such they remain on the negotiating table. We remain committed to a solution to the problem by peaceful means, and for this a lessening of tension is a necessary ingredient.

In the face of continuous threats against Cyprus by the vastly superior military might of Turkey, whose ultimate aim is to keep the island a perpetual hostage, to destroy its sovereignty and to reduce it to a Turkish protectorate, the strong, principled support of United Nations Members is of paramount importance.

At this point, I wish to thank the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General for discussing the Cyprus problem on 24 September 1998 and for issuing a statement calling for an early resumption of a sustained process of direct negotiations between the two communities, reminding them at the same time of the need to achieve a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with Security Council resolutions and to avoid any actions which might increase tension.

I reply "Yes" to the resumption of a sustained process of direct negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions; I reply "Yes" to avoiding any action that might increase tension and thus jeopardize progress in the negotiating process.

We trust that we can rely once again on the active solidarity of Members at this crucial juncture, as the most sacred principles of the United Nations Charter and the credibility of the world public order itself come into focus in this respect.

As we approach the new millennium, the leaders of the world must decide what kind of world we want our children and grandchildren to live in. Is it a world of sheer interests and lack of principles, where cold calculations of economic and strategic interests are pre-eminent, or a world governed by justice and respect for human rights, which is the only solution for permanent peace and stability in the world?

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, His Excellency the Right Honourable Donald Charles McKinnon, on whom I now call.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): May I start, Sir, by congratulating Mr. Opertti on his election as President of this great Assembly, and wishing him well as he guides its deliberations. I was privileged to visit his country, Uruguay, earlier this year, and appreciated the warmth and hospitality on that occasion.

I would also like to express our thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, who, with considerable commitment, presided over the introduction of many important reform measures during the past session.

Each year this debate provides an opportunity to take a longer perspective on the United Nations — to look back and, of course, to look ahead. We have achievements to acknowledge and challenges for the future to consider. In doing so, our view is informed by present-day conditions. We are living in very difficult times. The economic events that have unfolded over the last year, initially in Asia, now show signs of having a global impact. They will affect developed and developing countries alike across most regions of the world. The problems that face us demand a calm and steady response if financial troubles are not to spill over into wider instability. This presents a direct challenge to us all, and a test of the component parts of the multilateral system.

This year we mark 50-year milestones in two major areas of United Nations work, two areas that distinguish this half-century from earlier times: international peacekeeping and the development of international human rights law. Both have a part to play in responding to the challenges of the present day. Both typify the unique

contribution of the United Nations system. It is in this global setting that universal international norms can be established. The international rule of law gives us a framework with which to deal confidently with the problems that confront us. And it is through collective security that the countries of the world can work together to promote and reinforce peace and stability.

New Zealand, as a small country, has from the outset valued the opportunities for global debate and collective action provided by the United Nations. We are committed to the strengthening of that system. We believe its effective operation is essential to the well-being of our world.

We are, of course, as many are, conscious of the criticisms that have been levelled at the United Nations in recent years. Ten years ago the United Nations stock was very high. The end of the cold war was seen as heralding a new age. In 1988 the United Nations peacekeeping forces were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At the turn of the decade there was talk of a new world order.

But the world community's expectations of what could be achieved sometimes exceeded Member States' own political will to deliver. And the United Nations machinery, which had grown and expanded to meet world expectations, proved too cumbersome — and often very costly — to respond effectively.

Euphoria about the United Nations began to give way to cynicism. One editorial writer this year referred to the United Nations as "a busted flush". But when we take a longer view it is clear that neither euphoria nor cynicism is the appropriate reaction.

Since the end of the cold war the United Nations peacekeeping machinery has been used as never before. There have been some marked successes and, regrettably, some failures. Much has been learned. Future peacekeeping mandates must reflect the lessons learned.

The need for the United Nations to be able to carry out its peacekeeping role remains. Its successes point to what it can achieve. But today fewer troops are wearing the blue beret, and troop-contributing countries do not receive timely reimbursement.

The largest contributor's arrears in peacekeeping and the regular budget cast a long shadow over the Organization. Dues outstanding at present have reached alarming proportions. This affects all — large nations and small nations.

We cannot afford to have the capacity of the United Nations restricted by this constant budget uncertainty.

In my own area of the South Pacific we developed a regional response to a regional problem. I am referring to the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, an island which was ravaged by civil war for nine years but has enjoyed peace for the last 12 months. It was the Governments of the region that set out to help the Government of Papua New Guinea and representatives of the Bougainville people to bring this horror to an end. The contributions of Australia, Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and my own country have played a valuable and significant role, and there is now growing hope and confidence on Bougainville — rare commodities for almost a decade. The Lincoln Agreement, signed in Christchurch, New Zealand, in January, while formalizing the ceasefire, paved the way also for United Nations participation. We welcomed the United Nations decision to set up a small political office on the island. This commitment by the United Nations will help strengthen the peace process there.

Today the world faces uncertainty caused by the financial turmoil which began in Asia. It is affecting the Russian Federation, is putting many countries in Latin America under pressure and is now touching just about everybody. The sudden plunge in investor confidence and the reversal of developing markets' short capital flows has dramatically changed economic and social prospects. World economic growth this year will be significantly reduced.

This most serious economic situation in many years has the potential to intrude upon all of our lives. We must cooperate to turn this crisis around. And at the national level we must take the actions required, not just for our own sakes but in the interests of the broader international community. This includes refraining from protectionist reactions, which could only exacerbate it, and pushing ahead with liberalization of markets wherever possible.

A serious challenge is to ensure that economic insecurity does not threaten political and social stability. We must resist pressures to take political actions that we would normally avoid. The best way to achieve this is through a collective approach to the problems that confront us; to strengthen our multilateral institutions in the United Nations system and elsewhere and build confidence in our joint ability to work through difficult times.

I was particularly struck by the comments of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on these matters in his statement on Monday. His characterization of the crisis — that it is not just financial or economic or social or political, but all of these things at once — is exactly right. I thoroughly endorse the Secretary-General's conclusion that we must address the crisis on all these fronts.

As a forum for debate, and as a body capable of taking global action, the United Nations, together with its specialized agencies, has an important role to play in building capacity and providing social support where it is needed. Much of what the United Nations has achieved provides the norms and mechanisms to help us through difficult times of the sort we are facing right now. The challenge for the Organization is to act decisively to tackle the problems that have the potential to undermine our security, problems that have their greatest impact on ordinary people in developing countries. Now is not the time to go backwards.

Recent tragic events in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam have underlined that the fight against terrorism is far from over. The response to terrorism must be decisive and unequivocal. The international community has a duty to ensure that there are no safe havens for terrorist groups. Universal commitment to the network of anti-terrorist instruments must be a fundamental objective of all Members of this Organization.

War crimes and crimes against humanity have seen a resurgence in this last part of the twentieth century. New Zealand supports the work of the ad hoc war crimes Tribunals in bringing criminals to justice. But this is not enough. New Zealand has long called for an international criminal court that would have jurisdiction over such crimes. We commend the effort of those who, through much hard work, dedication and compromise, enabled the Statute for the International Criminal Court to be adopted. It is our expectation that, with the support of the international community, the Court will prove an effective tool in the fight against those who carry out appalling atrocities.

Nowhere is the need for multilateral action more clearly obvious than in our efforts to halt environmental degradation and promote sustainable development.

New Zealand is honoured to have our own Environment Minister, the Honourable Simon Upton, chair the Commission on Sustainable Development for its seventh session. It is our strong hope that this session will see us advance Agenda 21, and take further steps towards achieving the goals set at the Rio Earth Summit six years ago. It is appropriate that in the United Nations Year of the Ocean the session's themes will include oceans and seas and the review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in preparation for next year's special session of the General Assembly.

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted last December was a positive first step in dealing with this quintessentially global problem. There remain some important implementation issues to be resolved. The Fourth Congress of the parties in Buenos Aires will provide an opportunity to make further progress.

Thanks to the commitment of the Secretary-General, we now have an Organization that is efficient and effective. There is more to be done if this great Organization is to meet the challenges of the present day: changes that make it possible to redirect efforts from the administration of the Organization to its front-line work in development and confronting global problems.

New Zealand looks forward to continuing the dialogue on financing for development. Through our current membership of the Economic and Social Council we have followed closely the evolving debate on this very important issue. We very much welcome the initiatives taken by the Organization towards closer linkages with the Bretton Woods Institutions. Those institutions are themselves at the forefront of the effort to tackle the present economic crisis, probably the greatest challenge they have ever had. However, we must decide whether in their present form they are appropriate for the twenty-first century.

This Organization, too, like any other, needs to respond to changing circumstances, and be flexible enough to meet new challenges. It must reflect the world of today, not stay fixed in the patterns of earlier times. The East-West conflict is well behind us. We now need to address anew the divide between North and South. The United Nations development role is crucial. Once again I believe the Secretary-General hit the nail on the head when he described in his statement on Monday the need to restore development to its proper place in global economic strategy. Also essential are measures to free up trade and investment flows, and promote access to information and technology. All of these are tools with

which to fight the economic downturn which is confronting us.

The United Nations clearly has the leading role to play in development. Other international institutions play a complementary part. I am personally conscious of the particular contribution made by the Commonwealth through the recent Commonwealth Small States Mission. That Mission highlighted the special vulnerability of small States, which has led to the establishment of the Commonwealth/World Bank task force on the issue which will have relevance to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the question of vulnerability.

Within the United Nations we need to correct the North-South imbalance to which I referred through reform of the Security Council. More equitable representation on the Council would better reflect the world as it is and today's United Nations. Expansion is proving a complex issue, but there has been some good progress this year in the equally important area of reforming the Council's working methods. Altogether, these are matters which require careful consideration and negotiation. Setting artificial deadlines ahead of general agreement on a reform package would not be helpful and could in fact prove damaging to the Organization. Any reforms must enjoy the support of the greatest possible number of Member States.

I should add that regional groups in the United Nations still reflect an earlier era. New Zealand is certainly open to new ideas on how groupings can be reorganized to create a more equitable distribution of electoral opportunities and to recognize modern-day political and economic linkages.

In the field of disarmament and arms control, it is timely to consider how far we have come and what we have achieved. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996 certainly promised the end of nuclear testing. But the global non-proliferation norm was shattered by the nuclear testing in South Asia, raising grave fears of a potential arms race. New Zealand has taken some encouragement from statements made in this Hall in recent days, and hopes that 1999 will be the year in which all countries that have not yet done so will sign up unconditionally to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The Conference on Disarmament has now agreed to proceed with negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. New Zealand wants to see those negotiations concluded as soon as possible. There must be no stepping back from the objective of complete disarmament, including the elimination of nuclear weapons. New Zealand's commitment to this objective was reiterated in the declaration which I, together with the Foreign Ministers of seven other countries, issued on 9 June. New Zealand is now working with those countries on a draft resolution based on the concerns outlined in the declaration.

One achievement which I personally see as a top priority for 1999 is the conclusion of a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Following a very successful initiative from Australia, I was pleased to chair a group of ministers who this week issued a statement urging Governments to commit themselves to completing this task.

New Zealand supports the actions of the United Nations to ensure the elimination of Iraq's stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and the threat they pose to the security of the region. We urge the Government of Iraq to resume cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission so that the elimination of these dreadful weapons can be confirmed. Then the Security Council can once more address the question of lifting sanctions.

In the 50 years since Member States adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the significance of the Declaration has been demonstrated time and time again. Yet there remains much to be done before the vision in the Charter and in the Declaration can be realized for all. We are confident that, under the leadership of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we will continue to make good progress towards the realization of that vision.

The United Nations can add value in promoting and protecting fundamental human rights standards, emphasizing practical capacity-building efforts. We have been supporting the High Commissioner's efforts in this area, and we will continue to do so.

We see countries in all regions of the world seeking the international community's support as they build structures to provide good governance and deliver hope and greater well-being to their people. In particular, I am

encouraged by developments in Nigeria and in Sierra Leone in this regard.

As the last 50 years have demonstrated, this Organization has added a whole new dimension to cooperation among nations. No lesser body could have achieved so much. In the longer perspective of history it will be the dramatic development of the international rule of law and the evolution of collective approaches to security, both political and economic, which will characterize our era. In other words, that really is the work of the United Nations.

Now, with the challenge of the economic problems that face us, we nations of the world are more dependent than ever on solving our shared problems together. New Zealand therefore rededicates itself to the United Nations and to the ideals that this Organization stands for.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Hong Soon-young.

Mr. Hong (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I sincerely congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. We are fully confident that the Assembly will reap fruitful results under his distinguished leadership. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, and to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

I would like to discuss today our common future and the various efforts that we will need to consider to ensure its betterment. With the new millennium just around the corner, we must contemplate the possibilities for our future world. With confidence and pride, we can look back over the past five decades and note with appreciation the tremendous contributions the United Nations has made towards international peace and prosperity. We must also note that today the United Nations is confronted with enormous challenges and opportunities. The identification of these challenges, both within the United Nations itself and in the world with which the United Nations must engage, is where our discussion must begin.

As a world community, we face trends and challenges that test our wisdom and courage. Before I discuss our common efforts, I would like to begin by addressing how we are now handling our own concerns in Korea. Last February, the Republic of Korea inaugurated the Government of President Kim Dae-jung. This Government carries special significance for the Korean people because it marks the first time an opposition party has acceded to power in the 50-year constitutional history of Korea.

The Republic of Korea is one of the countries that gained independence during the last half-century; it has subsequently developed into a liberal democracy within a relatively short period of time. Poverty-stricken and war-torn only 50 years ago, the Republic of Korea has now grown to be a middle-power State.

My country is currently endeavouring to overcome enormous economic difficulties and to ensure the parallel and harmonious development of democracy and free market economy. We are well aware that the world is watching to see if and how we can accomplish such a difficult task. On 15 August 1998, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Government of the Republic of Korea, President Kim Dae Jung proclaimed the launching of our "Second Nation Building" to define the nation's efforts to overcome the current crisis and to foster Korea's democracy and market economy to greater maturity.

Our immediate concerns, however, are not only economic. The new Government of the Republic of Korea formulated the "Sunshine Policy", a policy of constructive engagement, as the cornerstone of its stance towards North Korea. Division, war and confrontation have more often than not characterized inter-Korean relations. Changing the nature of this relationship requires the restoration and cultivation of mutual trust between the two parties. To achieve these goals, President Kim announced the following three principles immediately after his inauguration: no tolerance of any military provocation by North Korea; no attempts on our part to absorb the North; and the active promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation, exchange and cooperation.

In line with these principles, my Government is encouraging private sector initiatives to pursue exchanges and cooperation with the North at their own discretion, while maintaining the principle of reciprocity at the governmental level. The Republic of Korea will remain committed to actively responding to the appeals of the United Nations and other international organizations to assist North Korea to overcome its food shortages and economic difficulties. We believe that inter-Korean consultations are indispensable for North Korea's economic recovery. In this regard, we also look forward

to the role of the United Nations system as a facilitator of this process.

In his August speech, President Kim Dae Jung further proposed the establishment of a permanent inter-Korean dialogue arrangement headed by ministerial or vice-ministerial officials, in the hope of opening a new era of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas. He also made it clear that the Republic of Korea is willing to send an envoy to Pyongyang to discuss this proposal. The main thrust of President Kim's engagement policy is to establish a workable system of peaceful coexistence based on reconciliation and mutual trust.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea reacted passively or even negatively to these proposals. It provoked the Republic of Korea by infiltrating a submarine into South Korean territorial waters in June, and again in late August by launching a rocket into the western Pacific Ocean without any prior warning. My Government deplores these acts of provocation. They pose a serious threat to our security. But despite these acts of provocation, my Government continues to uphold the keynote of its engagement policy so that the two Koreas might come to enjoy the benefits of peaceful coexistence.

My Government hopes that the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will put aside its defiance and respond positively to our calls for dialogue and collaboration. We would like to revitalize and implement the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement of 1992 through South-North dialogue. My Government will try to ease tension and create a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula through the four-party talks process. I wish to reiterate that our immediate objective is, first and foremost, peaceful coexistence. We hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will respond with an equal display of sincerity and good faith to our policies of accommodation.

I would now like to share some thoughts with you on the current global economic situation. In the past decade, we have witnessed deepening interdependence among countries in the accelerated, market-driven process of globalization. However, contrary to earlier expectations that the globalization process would stimulate world economic growth and reduce the gap between developed and developing countries, the international community is now baffled by the negative repercussions of rapid globalization. Asian countries, which have long been a model of economic development, are now struggling with serious financial crises. Other countries are also suffering economic unrest, and together these may lead to global economic turmoil.

The international community, amid sudden and unexpected economic turbulences, would be well advised to develop a common strategy to maximize potential economic benefits of market liberalization and globalization. Towards this end, my Government welcomes the United Nations initiative to strengthen its dialogue and cooperation with the Bretton Woods system. The United Nations is expected to play a more active role in addressing diverse problems arising from the globalization process.

Among the various factors that triggered our own domestic economic difficulties was a loose application of the rule of accountability in the corporate and financial sector. My Government is trying to turn the current financial crisis into an opportunity to reform and revitalize its economy. We are taking bold and decisive steps towards a comprehensive structural reform based on democracy and market principles. This structural reform is intended to ensure deregulation of economic activities, transparency and accountability in the financial and corporate sector, and mobility in the labour market. When the ongoing structural reform is successfully completed, the Republic of Korea will be a more free and more open society, contributing to the resurgence of economic dynamism in the Asian region. This is the goal of our structural reform.

In spite of overall growth in the world economy, the least developed countries continue to be marginalized and still do not receive their fair share of the benefits of that general trend. As a community, we should pay more attention to the deteriorating situation in these marginalized countries and should strengthen economic and development cooperation for their sustainable growth. For this purpose, my Government supports the development of the least developed countries through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and cooperates with United Nations regional economic commissions, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Even with the current financial crisis, the Republic of Korea continues to play its due role in development cooperation, with KOICA as its focal point.

While contributing to the strengthening of multilateral cooperation, we are also participating in regional cooperation efforts aimed at stimulating and

sustaining steady regional growth and balanced development for the Asia-Pacific region. We are contributing to regional liberalization of trade and investment through active involvement in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC). In addition, my Government is scheduled to host the third summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting in the year 2000. We will do our best to make the summit a milestone in building a comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe.

Beyond these immediate concerns for economic revitalization in Korea and the world community in general, we are faced with another long-term challenge, that of environmental protection. Climate changes, for instance, demand urgent attention and concrete actions by all countries. Last year, we made historic progress in combating global warming by adopting the Kyoto Protocol. I am pleased to say that my Government will accede to the Kyoto Protocol this afternoon.

I should like to take this opportunity to say a few words about the International Vaccine Institute (IVI). My Government has hosted IVI as a part of its commitment to international efforts to prevent childhood diseases, especially those in developing countries. Thirty-two Governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) have signed the Establishment Agreement of IVI, aimed at developing and distributing non-commercial vaccines. Yesterday in New York, the Government of the Republic of Korea and IVI signed the Headquarters Agreement. I look forward to more active support and to the substantial participation of Member States in this worthy project.

Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and despite strenuous efforts by the United Nations and human rights defenders, we are still witnessing, to our dismay, serious human rights violations and blatant challenges to United Nations human rights mechanisms throughout the world. Notwithstanding these grim realities, I am convinced that history is moving towards universal respect for human rights and dignity. In this context, my Government fully supports the Secretary-General's initiative to mainstream human rights in all of the United Nations activities and programmes. As an initiative to bolster national human rights safeguard mechanisms, my Government has begun preparations for enacting a comprehensive human rights act and establishing a national human rights institution.

My Government welcomes the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in Rome last July. We are confident that the establishment of the Court will be a landmark in strengthening the international legal system. We earnestly hope that the Court will be launched as soon as possible.

In the rapidly changing international security environment of the post-cold-war era, the United Nations is now faced with new challenges arising from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We deeply regret the recent nuclear tests carried out by India and then Pakistan. These tests seriously undermine the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon the States concerned to desist from further nuclear testing and weaponization, and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. We also urge the international community to maintain vigilance to prevent the transfer of their nuclear weapons-related materials, equipment and technology to third countries.

In this context, we believe that the early entry into force and the securing of the universality of the CTBT should be a high priority of the disarmament agenda. My Government is proceeding with its domestic procedures for the ratification of the CTBT next year. At the same time, we welcome the decision made at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva last month to establish an ad hoc committee on the Fissile Material Cut-off Convention. We also call upon all nuclear-weapon States faithfully to comply with their obligations to undertake nuclear disarmament pursuant to article VI of the NPT.

We stress once again that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a State party to the NPT, should fully comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement. It should also carry out its obligations to freeze its nuclear activities and eventually dismantle the related facilities in accordance with the Geneva Agreed Framework. In particular, it should cooperate closely with the IAEA in preserving necessary information related to its past nuclear activities. Furthermore, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to demonstrate its sincerity in upholding the Agreed Framework by guaranteeing full transparency with regard to the recently discovered underground facilities near Yongbyon.

For its part, my Government will make continued efforts, together with the United States, Japan and other parties concerned, for smooth progress in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project, pursuant to the Agreed Framework. As the

KEDO project contributes to the peace and security of the region, we look forward to continued political and financial support from the international community. We also believe that both Koreas should renew their efforts to implement the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992.

My Government shares the grave concern of the international community over the launching of the rocket-propelled object by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 31 August. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ability to develop delivery means of weapons of mass destruction poses a serious threat to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in North-East Asia. The international community should make concerted efforts to induce the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting further missile development, testing and exporting.

Chemical and biological weapons are another category of weapons of mass destruction that requires our serious attention. We commend the valuable achievements of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons over the last year and a half. Regrettably, a number of countries presumed to possess chemical weapons, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, have not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We urge those States to do so without delay. My delegation also hopes for an early adoption of the Verification Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention.

In recent years, we have seen the United Nations peacekeeping operations expand their activities to such areas as repatriation of refugees, demilitarization and disbanding of armies, and the policing and monitoring of elections. While this trend can be viewed positively, my delegation is deeply concerned about the increasing number of victims among civilian volunteers and United Nations personnel. The Republic of Korea, while serving as a member of the Security Council last year, initiated a Council open debate on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees in conflict situations, which led to the adoption of a presidential statement. We hope that the Secretary-General's report on this topic, released this week, will renew the international community's awareness of this issue and lead to concrete follow-up measures.

My delegation is deeply disturbed by the recent increase in brutal international terrorist activities. The Republic of Korea will not tolerate any acts of terrorism, and urges all Member States to cooperate in devising effective international measures to combat terrorism.

On the threshold of the new millennium, the international community is encountering an increasingly complex set of challenges to peace and security. At this critical juncture, the Security Council needs to reform itself to adapt to the drastically changed international environment.

The Republic of Korea fully supports an expanded, more representative and democratic Security Council. However, no Security Council reform package will be feasible without universal support among Member States. In this regard, we hope that the Council reform package will be worked out on the broadest consensus possible, far exceeding the mandatory endorsement by two thirds of the members of the General Assembly. In this context, we note with appreciation the efforts of the Working Group on Security Council reform to seek a realistic and practical solution which should enjoy general agreement among Member States.

My delegation welcomes the reform efforts that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has made since taking office. The Republic of Korea has consistently supported the Secretary-General's reform initiatives and will continue to do so in our common efforts to revitalize the Organization in the years ahead. We hope that the Millennium Assembly, to be held in the year 2000, will serve as an opportunity to crystallize the visions and strategies needed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

We look forward to the twenty-first century with great expectations. The time ahead of us will undoubtedly pose daunting challenges. Of this, I am certain. But it also promises a bright future if we, together, can successfully rise to the occasion. The United Nations is a tool and a forum; it is a symbol — the best that we have — of our joint commitment to making the next century more secure, more humane and more hopeful than the last one. The Republic of Korea, together with other Member States, stands ready to make its due contributions towards these lofty goals.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to convey my sincere congratulations to Mr. Opertti upon his election as President of the General Assembly at this session and to

express my full confidence that he will lead its work wisely and ably.

It gives me pleasure as well to pay tribute to the wise leadership of the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, President of the Assembly at its last session, particularly in promoting the efforts for reform and renewal in the United Nations.

I would like also to salute the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who displayed his wisdom and expertise in dealing with world crises and for his outstanding contribution to increasing the efficiency of the Organization in order for it to keep pace with the changing times, contribute to the building of the new international order and avoid the pitfalls.

This is the next-to-last session of the General Assembly in this century. Let it be a session for reflection and preparation for the last session of the twentieth century, next year. Let us take stock of the international work of a whole century, its positive and negative aspects alike. Let us evaluate the achievements and innovations of mankind, where it failed and why. Let us list and analyse the work done and the progress made by the United Nations to create constructive international cooperation and establish peace. Let us also talk about what remains on the international agenda and what will be left for succeeding generations to finish and accomplish.

In the Charter of the United Nations, we determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Have we done so? Where did we succeed, where did we fail, and why? We also reaffirmed our faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity of nations and human beings. How far have we gone in translating this solemn reaffirmation into a reality? We committed ourselves to promoting social progress and better standards of life, and to using the United Nations for the promotion of the social and economic advancement of all peoples. Have we honoured that commitment? We determined to practise tolerance and live together in peace and neighbourliness. Have we achieved that? We determined to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and not to use armed force except for common interest. Has this determination come true? Have we achieved what we determined to do?

Immediately after the end of the cold war in the late 1980s, some spoke of "the clash of civilizations". This is a dangerous theory that concerns humanity and the course it will chart for itself — whether conflict and conflagration or coexistence and peace. We, the representatives of the international community, cannot, at this historical juncture, ignore such a dangerous argument and a destructive theory that runs counter to the common work and collective obligations we agreed upon for international life. We, the children of the twentieth century, must deal with this theory and respond to it clearly. We cannot let such a negative call go without a response or correction. What President Clinton said in his address before the Assembly, rejecting this theory and expressing respect for Islamic civilization, is really worthy of consideration and appreciation.

In our opinion, we must offer the next century our confident view that we are one community based on pluralism — intellectual, religious and cultural pluralism and diversity. We must reaffirm that this diversity does not prejudice the unity of the international community. Rather, it strengthens that unity, making the international community a dynamic whole based on healthy competition, positive coexistence and a common appreciation for the achievements of the many societies that constitute the international community. Our community cannot be dependent on the achievements of one single society or tend to follow one single culture. The true path lies in positive interaction, complementarity and coexistence among civilizations. It does not lie in the creation of causes for conflict or in fanning the flames of confrontation and of clash between civilizations. If this is allowed to happen, it will create a dangerous hotbed of world tension and will ultimately result in a grave loss for one and all.

Once again we are at a historic juncture where a strong message from this generation is indeed necessary. We want to see the rights of people and nations upheld without differences as to priorities and definitions. We want rational disarmament and an end to the arms race without distinction or discrimination. We want genuine development that does not entrench poverty or ignore its causes. We want a clean environment, a science that benefits all and a technology whose achievements and applications are beneficial to all. We want a common position in the face of international terrorism. We want freedom and liberation for all peoples and a firm stand in the face of the forces of oppression, racism and occupation. We want a commitment to the rule of law and respect for established norms and for the purposes and principles we consensually consecrated in the Charter of the United Nations.

In order to evaluate the experiences of the past and to chart our future course, I propose that this session create a committee to commence drafting a clear statement to history to be issued at the close of the next session. This statement should include our assessment of the past and our vision of the future. It should be issued a few days before the end of the century and the beginning of the new millennium.

The world today is passing through a stage of chaos, and there is a general feeling of discontent. Wars, terrorism, backwardness, racism, religious intolerance: are these the remnants of past eras? Or are they the result of practices that continue to plague our societies? Or are they an integral part of the fabric of human life? Or are they the result of globalization and the factors of tension and instability contained in the new world order?

I believe we all sense the instability in international life. We have witnessed and continue to witness widespread acts of terrorism throughout all continents of the world. We have witnessed widespread extremism in various faiths and widespread injustice in various societies. All this points to the fact that richness and poverty, despite their undisputed importance as two of the facts of life, do not constitute the only causes of world instability. There are other causes, foremost among which is the policy of double standards, the lack of democracy in international relations, the brazen call for a clash of civilizations and the varying interpretations of the principles of legality. All these elements lead to the feeling of discontent, indeed, to the general feeling of insecurity.

I believe it is incumbent upon us to consider this matter. These questions call for a clear answer because the challenge is enormous, and the results could therefore be grave. We are all in the same boat. This responsibility is not the responsibility of any one society. If globalization and universality are much talked about, this should mean that they call for a sharing of responsibility.

I would like to deal briefly with some of the central issues that occupy our minds at this stage.

I shall start with terrorism. Some note, and rightly so, that this international crime against all societies is perpetrated using tight organizations, facilitated sometimes by circumstances in which some have misguidedly supported certain groups by encouraging and dealing with them until those groups turned against them. This is a lesson we must learn in order to avoid its repetition. Furthermore, some have noted, and rightly so, that the hand of terrorism has struck more than one place at the same time: Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Omagh in Ireland. Before then, that hand of terrorism struck many places in the world, for different motives, certainly. But the phenomenon is one and the same, and it is intolerable. We must reflect upon this matter together.

In this regard, I would like to underline the importance of the legislation enacted by the British House of Commons on dealing with the acts of conspiracy committed on British territory, of the proposal of President Jacques Chirac of France on controlling the financing of terrorist groups, and of what was said by President Clinton in his statement before the Assembly in this regard. I find it important also in this connection to put before the Assembly the call of President Hosni Mubarak to convene an international summit under the auspices of the United Nations. The summit should direct the international community to deal with terrorism legally, politically, economically and technologically. This call was supported in the final communiqué of the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. I suggest that the General Assembly consider the Egyptian call for the proposed summit. I also call upon the Secretary-General to start working towards its convening.

Turning to disarmament, allow me to say that recent developments have proved the shortcomings of the nuclear non-proliferation regime in its current form, which lacks universality. This reaffirms the need for urgent and serious steps to remedy that shortcoming, and to strengthen the efficiency of the regime through achieving its universality and avoiding the policy of double standards; otherwise, we will end up with a state of deep mistrust and an arms race that would in turn lead to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons.

For the last three decades, Egypt has consistently called for making the Middle East free from nuclear weapons. This call was further reinforced by its 1990 initiative to make the region free from weapons of mass destruction. Today, we reiterate this call with a view to maintaining peace and security in the region.

Starting from this same premise, Egypt, together with seven other States, recently proposed a new agenda to strengthen the international commitment towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction, an initiative we invite the Assembly to support. In this connection, allow me to place on record the call of President Hosni Mubarak to convene an international conference to

consider the elimination of those weapons from the whole world within an agreed time-frame. I invite members of the Assembly to work together in order to translate that call into a reality.

I now move to the question of the reform of the United Nations. Here, the premise of the Egyptian policy is the same as that adopted by the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban: we call for commitment to the principles of the Charter and international law as a common position on the agenda for reform.

Here, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his ideas and initiatives in this regard. I would also like to reaffirm what the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted concerning the importance of taking into account the views of the Member States of the United Nations in the implementation of the reform policies and the reaffirmation of the pivotal role of the General Assembly in the decision-making process, as the main democratic framework of the United Nations.

Concerning the Security Council, the position of Egypt is based on the same elements adopted by the non-aligned States as follows: first, the need to deal with the questions of the reform of the working methods of the Security Council and the expansion of its membership within an integrated framework; secondly, increasing the membership of the Security Council by no fewer than 11 members and the allocation of a number of permanent seats for developing countries, with strict observance of the principles of equitable geographical distribution and equality of States; thirdly, the unacceptability of any attempt at a partial or selective expansion of the membership of the Security Council; fourthly, the inadmissibility of any predetermined time-frame to complete the process of restructuring the Security Council; and lastly, the need for any resolution that would result in amending the Charter, the so-called framework resolution, to be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the States Members of the United Nations, in accordance with Article 108 of the Charter.

In addition, Egypt is committed to the decision of the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Harare in 1997 on the allocation of five non-permanent seats and two permanent seats for the African continent, to be rotated in accordance with agreed criteria of the Group of African States.

On the subject of the reform of the United Nations, I would like to refer to a matter that was the subject of extensive deliberations in the United Nations and in the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement — namely, the sanctions imposed by the Security Council. As the ultimate objective of such sanctions is to influence certain political regimes to bring them into compliance with the rules of international legality, it is therefore necessary that all means under Chapter VI of the Charter be exhausted before resorting to Chapter VII and its applications. The clarity of the objective of imposing sanctions and a thorough consideration of their consequences in the short and long terms, including human suffering, are of paramount importance.

An excessive imposition of sanctions, or their perpetuation without acceptable reason or a clear time-frame, will erode their credibility and the commitments made to applying them. Therefore, there is a need for patience, prudence and a determination of the time-frame of sanctions.

I now turn to the Middle East, which is suffering from numerous problems, some chronic and others fairly recent, which we hope will not also become chronic ones. I am referring here to the situation of Iraq, which must reach its natural conclusion: the lifting of the sanctions through implementation of the Security Council's resolutions and in accordance with their provisions. This requires goodwill, proper conduct and the establishment of constructive and stable cooperation between Iraq and the mechanisms of the Security Council. This is a shared responsibility, not the responsibility of one party alone. Needless to say, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is an integral part of their elimination in the region as a whole, as was indeed reflected in Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

I would also like to refer to the Lockerbie issue and express our satisfaction at the recent positive development of the situation by the consent of the parties to that yet-to-be settled dispute. This represents significant progress towards the trial of the two suspects and establishing the truth. We all hope that progress will be made, in good faith, as soon as possible within the framework of the contacts made by the Secretary-General and that an agreement will be reached on the required procedures and guarantees. Thus, the whole matter will be put behind us, the sanctions imposed on Libya will be lifted and a long overdue end to a period of tension will come to pass.

At another level, we believe that the region must avoid anything that could add to its tensions: declarations

of strategic alliances that create discord and lead to counter-alliances; sneaking into the nuclear club, which will lead to an arms race in the region, unless Israel, like all other States of the region, accedes to the Non-Proliferation Treaty; the lack of a solution to the problems and disputes of sovereignty, foremost among which is the question of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf; and attempts at partitioning and jeopardizing the unity and territorial integrity of States, as is the case with Iraq and Sudan.

As for the peace process, which is about to collapse, the situation is indeed grave, not only because of the deadlock it has reached, but also because the roots of the problem go much deeper than that. The deadlock is related to the negative change in the policy of Israel, which believes that the current international situation enables it to impose its exaggerated demands on the Arab parties and to impose an Israeli peace on the Middle East. This is probably due to the belief which it has evolved, namely that no person, no Government and no State would be able to stand in its way, pressure it or refuse its demands.

We reject this policy, which uses security considerations to justify occupation, thus stripping security requirements, which could be legitimate, of any meaning. Such requirements could have been negotiated and reasonable ones accepted on a reciprocal basis. Yet the validity, true weight and credibility of those Israeli security requirements have become dubious. Egypt, the first Arab State to establish peace with Israel and the largest one with a role in the Middle East and the Arab and Islamic worlds, cannot accept such negative policies, which will drive the region once more towards the flames of tension, conflict and instability.

We have made peace with Israel. The Arab States have moved towards the same objective on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which is based on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and on Israel's right to live in peace within its borders — which are, of course, the borders and the lines of June 1967 — as well as on the basis of the Madrid framework, namely, the principle of land for peace. With respect to the Palestinians, the Oslo accord provides for significant Israeli withdrawals before the final status negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides can begin.

At their summit meeting in Cairo in 1996, Arab leaders at the highest level expressed the commitment of Arab States to the peace process, since Arab-Israeli peace is a strategic objective to be achieved under international legality. But it requires a corresponding commitment from Israel to follow the road to peace in a manner that restores the rights and the occupied territories of the Palestinians and ensures balanced and equal security to all the States of the region, in accordance with the principle of land for peace.

The Arab summit decided that any disruption by Israel of these principles and bases of the peace process; that any reneging on the commitments it has made and agreements reached on the same path; and that any procrastination in their implementation will only set back the peace process. The attendant dangers and repercussions of such actions would relaunch the region into the spiral of tension and compel the Arab States to reconsider the steps they have taken towards Israel within the framework of the peace process. The Israeli Government alone would bear the full responsibility for such a development.

Regrettably, it has become evident that the Israeli Government is reneging on the commitments it has undertaken in the context of the Security Council's resolutions, the Madrid framework and the Oslo accord. This attitude logically compels us to take a forthright and determined opposition to Israel's negative position, which runs counter to the objective requirements for peace. If we do not, the effective international action necessary to deal with this grave situation will not be forthcoming.

We wonder what the Israeli Government really wants. The Arabs have given it acceptance, coexistence, peace and recognition. But it would seem that what the Israeli Government really wants is all of the above, plus most of the land and the privilege to disregard the rights of the Palestinians. This is simply unacceptable. Peoples have their dignity and the rights to their own land and to self-determination. No generation is entitled to cede such rights. They are the rights of all generations — past, present and future — throughout history.

We reiterate that Israel must reconsider its position and its policy. The international situation is ever changing. What may be imposed today without justice or balance will disintegrate tomorrow. We want a stable, enduring agreement. This can be achieved only once we agree on a comprehensive package that includes Israel's complete withdrawal from the territories of Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza in Palestine; the establishment of a Palestinian State; an agreement on the final status of Jerusalem and the fate of the Palestinian

refugees; an agreement on security requirements, without undue exaggeration; the recognition of Israel as a State; and coexistence with it as a member of the family of the Middle East, within the framework of normal relations. I repeat that all this must constitute a package deal that cannot be divided to serve the interests of one party at the expense of the others.

Does the Israeli Government recognize the importance of justice and legitimacy? Does it realize the grave and present danger of spurning this opportunity to achieve peace? Letting this historic opportunity slip away and entering the next century with the file of the Arab-Israeli conflict still open will lead to tension and instability not only in the Middle East, but in the international community as a whole. Historical experience has proven that tension knows no boundaries, that instability cannot be confined to one specific region and that international peace and security are indivisible.

The international community must therefore raise its voice against the setback of the peace process and play its role in salvaging it. We are not calling for an international trial. Rather, we ask the international community to play its role in safeguarding the bases of peace agreed upon unanimously in the Security Council and at the Madrid Conference, and in the consideration of the measures necessary to restore the process to its correct track and to avert the eruption of further crises in the future.

It was in this spirit that Presidents Hosni Mubarak and Jacques Chirac announced their initiative to convene a conference of States determined to save the peace. We must emphasize that this Franco-Egyptian initiative does not aim at replacing or hampering any current positive efforts. It aims, rather, at reinforcing these efforts and ensuring their success, particularly those of the United States, which we support as long as they seek balanced agreements.

Egypt accords equal attention to issues of the African continent. Today, we are faced with two urgent and serious matters. The first pertains to the Horn of Africa, namely, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We strongly support the mediation efforts, led by the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, to arrive at a peaceful solution and the continued cessation of military hostilities. In this way will normalcy be restored and peace established.

The second question is the situation in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here, the efforts made by the leaders of Africa and the United Nations Secretary-General continue to be important. Such efforts preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and establish positive relations between it and its neighbours in the larger context of a cessation of military operations and of interference in its internal affairs. They also require the maintenance of its national unity within rational democracy.

The situation in Africa is being dangerously aggravated by these problems and by the continent's grave socio-economic situation. This requires special attention, which we call on the international community and the United Nations to give.

In conclusion, I must refer to the phenomenon of globalization. We must face its challenges and address its negative aspects, while maximizing its benefits. A number of developing countries have successfully dealt with globalization and achieved their necessary integration into the world economy. At the same time, many developed countries have adopted covert protectionist measures and new conditionalities, such as environmental and labour standards and continue to maintain tariff barriers against the primary exports of the developing countries. These measures run counter to the equitable bases of the world trading system. This is an important issue which we must address in the context of evaluating past achievements and challenges, and of shaping a new international order.

These are the questions which Egypt wished to put before this session as a modest contribution to shaping a common vision that would inspire the march of humanity in the coming decades, during which we hope that justice, equality, progress and prosperity will prevail.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Cooperation of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Jacques F. Poos.

Mr. Poos (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): As previous speakers have done, I would like to convey to the President my sincerest congratulations on his election to the presidency at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that our Assembly will benefit greatly from his sense of authority and leadership. I also wish to express my gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his

commitment and perseverance in conducting our work during the fifty-second session.

The Secretary-General of our Organization is devoting tireless energy to opening up new avenues for our common efforts. He has emphasized the crucial importance of good communications to ensure that the United Nations will be a catalyst both for those directly involved in international life and for our peoples. We share that belief with him and encourage him in that respect.

Last Tuesday, members heard the statement of Mr. Schüssel, President of the Council of the European Union. He spoke on behalf of all of the countries of the European Union, and Luxembourg fully supports the views expressed.

The presence of representatives of 185 States in this Hall reflects our common concern to ensure balance and security among nations, but also within our societies. Our concern is to ensure the permanence of values to which we are all committed in an ever-evolving world. In the context of its mandate to preserve international peace and security, our Organization regularly asks whether it has the means to ensure that the general interest, as perceived by our citizens, prevails. Surely, we must not be overly ambitious. We are aware of the complexity and the magnitude of the situations we face, and that these impose limits on our action. Therefore we must focus our operations and provide an appropriate framework for them. It is also our duty to acquire the means to act effectively whenever our ineffectiveness or slow response would seem to negatively affect the weakest among us.

Luxembourg supports the efforts under way to provide our Organization with permanent structures and to make available to it forces prepared for rapid and effective intervention whenever the Security Council, guarantor of the preservation of peace and security, deems it necessary.

Our common efforts to make our world safer suffered a serious setback following the nuclear tests recently carried out by two major countries in South Asia. We noted with satisfaction that the representatives of India and Pakistan have just announced from this rostrum that their countries are prepared to join the international community by acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We invite them to proceed in that direction as quickly as possible.

Will these efforts appear absurd, given the endless pursuit of the tragic discussion about the disarmament of Iraq? This spring the Security Council endorsed the memorandum of understanding submitted to it following the Secretary-General's visit to Baghdad. Since then, such cooperation has been called into question. Such abrupt changes generate concern and discouragement and call into question the credibility of our Organization. It is the Security Council's responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure that its decisions in this area are fully respected.

The President returned to the Chair.

Our Organization is pursuing conflict prevention and peacekeeping. At the recent meeting between the United Nations and the representatives of regional organizations, the proposal for development of a culture of prevention was put forward. Progress has been made in the concept of mutually supportive institutions and on support for the initiatives taken at the regional and subregional level.

While it is desirable to support such initiatives and efforts, we must remember that the Charter confers principle responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council and that the Council must fully play its role. We welcome the fact that in 1998 the Council once again authorized two peacekeeping operations, one in Sierra Leone and the other in the Central African Republic.

The Ottowa conference on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines was undeniably an invigorating success in an area which constantly creates innocent victims. This treaty, which has just entered into force, will make it possible to save many human lives. The news that anti-personnel mines are again being sown in Angola and along the borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is terrifying. Such action, if confirmed, must be condemned vigorously.

In Kosovo, the violence directed against the civilian population must end. It proves that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continues to follow paths which cannot but compromise progress in its integration into international and European structures. Armed action conducted by Albanian groups in Kosovo must also end. The scorn for human suffering displayed by the Serbian leaders and the extremists in Kosovo is incomprehensible.

A new status for Kosovo must emerge. It is inconceivable that such a status can emerge under the

sway of threat or, even worse, cold-hearted implacable violence, which would merely drive the wedge deeper to the point where the very idea of understanding would be absurd. As Security Council resolution 1199 (1998) requires, a political solution must be negotiated between the parties under the aegis of the international community. Firm cohesion between Europe, the United States and the Russian Federation should enable those in the region, as was the case previously, to address their future in a more rational and orderly way.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the extremist tendencies are on the decline. This political progress was rapidly reflected in concrete results achieved in the field, and today this war-torn country is engaged in reconstruction. It is comforting to note that a growing number of individuals charged with war crimes have been sent to the Tribunal at The Hague. The establishment and the functioning of the structures decided on in the context of the peace process are today becoming a reality.

The recent elections have confirmed this new realism. It is up to the international community to consolidate this trend, as it still appears to be fragile, and to ensure, in particular, the return of refugees and displaced persons. This latter question is particularly acute in Croatia and Albania.

Another key element for opening the way to a brighter future is a firm, unequivocal commitment by the regional parties and the international community. I refer to the peace process in the Middle East. Five years after the Oslo agreements, we must note the stagnation of the peace process, whose logic — the principle of land for peace — the current Israeli Government never really accepted.

The archaic and paralysing philosophy of refusal has unfortunately returned to the foreground; it is reflected in many initiatives which only increase tension, thus nullifying the efforts of those who advocate peace. The political leaders involved must reverse this trend so as to return to the good faith implementation of all the provisions of the Oslo agreements.

Our action, in that region and in others, must focus on convincing the parties involved that there is no alternative to peace.

It is regrettable that this central concept is also being called into question in a number of African regions. Tribal rivalries and resentments continue to supplant clearsightedness and the desire for good governance. In no case should the political leaders involved in the different flashpoints feel that their only choice is between submitting to events and shirking their responsibilities.

The struggles for influence and the war in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo are on the verge of degenerating into a regional conflict and bringing about a humanitarian catastrophe there too.

The causes of conflicts and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa call for a united response. The debate at ministerial level that the Security Council has just held on these topics was very helpful. The General Assembly will have occasion to consider this question over the course of its fifty-third session, with a view to a discussion on possible measures. While the future of Africa depends first of all on the efforts of Africans themselves, the international community must be actively involved in order to ensure respect for international law, and in order to carry out its duty of solidarity.

Recent events, with the terrible bombings perpetrated in Africa and Northern Ireland, remind us once again of the intolerable nature of terrorism. It is up to the international community to acquire an effective means of combating this scourge on an international level, and to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts answer for their crimes before the competent courts. We owe it to ourselves to put a definitive end to the culture of impunity in connection with terrorism.

Another priority for our General Assembly is reform of the Organization. We welcome the fact that some progress was made during the fifty-second session. But reform cannot be an isolated event; it must become a process that underlies all of our action. We pledge to continue actively supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General, and to add our efforts to his, with a view to giving the United Nations the capacity to respond in a flexible and evolving way to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Any in-depth reform of the system will remain fragile so long as the Organization lacks sound and reliable financial resources. The grave financial crisis which the Organization has experienced for a number of years must be considered as a threat to the effectiveness of the whole. Our proposed reforms will be consolidated only when all Member States have agreed fully to meet their obligations under the Charter by paying their arrears to the United Nations, and by paying on time and

unconditionally the full amount of their obligatory contributions, both to the Organization's regular budget and to the peacekeeping budget.

The maintenance of security and peace in the world cannot be dissociated from the international community's efforts on behalf of development.

When we see entire regions, even subcontinents, experiencing poverty and malnutrition, there is a shocking imbalance which will soon pose a threat to the security of the States concerned and to respect for the fundamental rights of the human individual.

When we see that generations of young people can hope for no future but unemployment or a frustrating inactivity, there exists a flagrant and unjust imbalance which will be a source of conflict.

When we see social categories permanently deprived of education and health care, that, too, is an imbalance to which we cannot be indifferent.

The economic, financial and social crisis currently besetting South-East Asia, Latin America and Russia has exacerbated this trend. Rationally, the international community must acknowledge that the means of intervention traditionally, and almost mechanically, employed to overcome economic crises have proved ineffective this time.

In his work *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme*, Fernand Braudel pointed out the profound source of this crisis:

> "the emergence of a savage capitalism, as distinct from what we consider to be a market economy".

A market economy, and particularly a social market economy, cannot do without a stable State capable of regulating competition and protecting the weak.

The strengthening or restoration of a democratic, working State in the countries in crisis seems to me to be an absolute priority.

The international community cannot shirk the obligation to shoulder its responsibilities and lend a strong hand. It will do this not only because of its duty of solidarity, but because the interests of one and all are linked.

Another area in which the interdependence of our objectives is particularly visible and tangible is that of the management of the world's natural resources. It is clear that we need to be ambitious when it comes to the long-term management of our environment.

Last year we met here in special session to undertake an initial evaluation of the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Conference on Environment and Development a little over six years ago. At Rio de Janeiro and during last year's evaluation session we defined the concept of a world partnership for sustainable development, a partnership respecting the fact that the protection of the environment cannot be dissociated from the economic and social development process.

Undeniable progress has been made in recent years: the entry into force of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. But it must be acknowledged that the world environment has continued to deteriorate.

Accordingly, it is essential to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted in Rio de Janeiro.

Luxembourg intends to shoulder its share of this responsibility. Accordingly, we have undertaken, in the context of the commitments made by the European Union at the Kyoto Conference, to reduce our emissions of six greenhouse gases to 28 per cent below 1990 levels by the year 2012.

In the context of the Biodiversity Convention, we also plan to establish a national network of protected areas covering 10 per cent of our national territory.

The goal of managing the world's material resources as a good parent would reflect an atavistic concern, that of guaranteeing security through careful preparation for the future, in particular through suitable education.

The recent Lisbon Conference devoted to the problems faced by young people rightly emphasized the need to provide training that is suited to the job market so as to prevent unemployment and marginalization. Such training must include education about responsibility. We therefore welcome the fact that the Lisbon Declaration commits Governments to ensuring the participation of young people in programmes that concern them. In that

way we can come closer to democratic civic education based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens and on the participation of young people in civil society.

Luxembourg has undertaken a long-term effort to make its own contribution to providing funds for development. Our efforts are aimed at attaining the target set by the United Nations of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance before the end of the millennium. Our efforts occupy an important place in the struggle against poverty, which is one of the main obstacles to development. At present our contribution is 0.56 per cent of gross national product and is equivalent to official development assistance of $195 per capita. According to those criteria, Luxembourg is fifth among donor countries in the Development Assistance Committee.

Fifty years ago our Organization adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the first time, a universal organization declared its determination to place respect for human rights at the heart of international relations. Since then, we have made considerable progress towards ensuring recognition for the universal value of such rights and their effective enjoyment.

Several international instruments have been added to the Universal Declaration so as to focus more precisely on what human rights represent and to ensure that the citizens of all countries of the world effectively enjoy these rights. Our Organization has established the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights, and concern for human rights now underlies all of its activities. This progress leads us to believe that human rights will find the central and permanent home at the heart of international life that they deserve.

We also note that the Criminal Tribunals established by the United Nations to bring to trial those accused of crimes committed during recent wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have recently been able to strengthen their authority and the scope of their action. This affirmation of their importance played a considerable role in the preparation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. I sincerely welcome the positive conclusion of the work of the recent Rome Conference. At the same time, I should like to emphasize the fact that the entire international community has given that new institution strong and constant support.

The end of the culture of impunity represents a decisive turning point in international relations at the end of this century. But this turning point will be convincing only if the Members of our Organization display a commitment to provide the new Court with the necessary credibility.

In this commemorative year, we must ensure that our achievements are assessed in depth and that we avoid complacency in the field of human rights. Only in this way will it be possible to expand the base on which we can build the values that the international community has so often said it is prepared to ensure for humankind as a whole.

I am confident that the United Nations will remain capable of steadfastly pursuing the attainment of the great objectives it has set itself: to serve men and women, ensure respect for their rights, preserve them from the scourge of war and lead them towards development and fulfilment. Luxembourg's support will certainly not be lacking.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, His Excellency The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, on whom I now call.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. With your experience and dedication to the goals of this Organization, you will guide us wisely and effectively in our work this year.

And important work it is, for as the century draws to a close, our security is more precarious than ever. The spectrum of threats is wide and growing. Traditional dangers persist, including the proliferation of weapons. But new threats — terrorism, crime and drugs — arise from a world in which the face of conflict has changed. Economic and social insecurity for the majority of our global population is on the rise. Increasingly, it is the well-being of individuals that is directly at stake.

(*spoke in French*)

There is an urgent need for solutions. The interdependence of all of our lives is unprecedented. It is essential for us to work together to confront these challenges. This means working through a vibrant United Nations. For Canada, the universal values set out in the Charter have acted as our moral compass in setting our global agenda. The United Nations system serves as the instrument in achieving our goals.

(spoke in English)

At the same time we recognize that the United Nations faces its own worries, and it, too, must change. But a strong, reinvigorated United Nations is still the best foundation for the future. As the contours of that future emerge, there is reason for hope. While old realities of power persist, a new system based on humanitarian standards, practices and law based upon needs and human security is beginning to show through.

Perhaps this new reality can best be seen in the common effort to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. The Secretary-General has hailed the adoption of the Ottawa Convention as an unprecedented achievement — one accomplished through a unique partnership of non-governmental organizations, Member States and international groups working together to eliminate a weapons system that victimizes the innocent.

Last week, Burkina Faso deposited the fortieth ratification of the treaty, thereby crossing the threshold needed to bring the treaty into force. This treaty, which has already attracted 130 signatories and 41 ratifications, will become part of the international legal framework as of 1 March next year. We welcome the offer by Mozambique to host the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention. We continue to urge those who have not done so to sign and ratify the Convention and join in this international endeavour.

But entry into force is just the first important step in bringing the treaty to life. Now we have to meet the treaty's goals. An effective coalition for action must work together in this next phase to take the mines out of the ground and to help the victims. The United Nations, through its mine action service, will mobilize and coordinate the efforts of the international community.

At the signing of the treaty on landmines in Ottawa last December, countries pledged $0.5 billion for mine action. My own Government has allocated $100 million as Canada's contribution to rid the world of these very cruel weapons. We have already put the money to work in some of the most severely affected States, with projects in Mozambique, Cambodia, Bosnia and Central America. Now we must put everyone's resources to work.

Landmines are not the only weapons that take a tragic, disproportionate toll on civilian populations. Small arms and light military weapons — cheap and easy to transport, smuggle or hide — have become the tools of choice for smugglers, terrorists and criminals.

The challenges arising from the proliferation and widespread abuse of small arms and light weapons are complex. But the impact on all of us, especially the most vulnerable, is direct and devastating. Eighty per cent of the victims are women and children. There are no easy solutions and no shortcuts. We cannot, however, afford to shrink from facing such a pervasive threat to our security. In Canada we pursue a three-pronged approach, dealing with the legal trade, illicit trafficking and peace-building challenges of small-arms proliferation. We hope, by working with others in the United Nations, to see the use of this terrible weapon come to an end.

Illegal drug-trafficking also threatens our peoples' security. The drug trade affects governance, undermines human rights and promotes cross-border conflicts. That is why Canada has proposed a Foreign Ministers' dialogue group in the Americas. We hope that this will be a forum which can provide guidance and generate ideas to help us curtail the collateral impact of the drug trade on Governments and on society. These and other emerging threats to our security, including terrorism, crime and environmental degradation, affect every one of us but are beyond the reach of any of us alone. They demand global, integrated solutions, which the United Nations is best suited to provide. The International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, concluded last year, ongoing work in developing a convention on transnational organized crime and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — all show that we are capable of working together to enhance our human security.

Moving the human security agenda forward also requires that we redouble efforts to address the root causes of conflict and risk. Peace and stability are indispensable to security, but they are not, regrettably, humanity's birthright. They must be built. Two years ago, we launched the Canadian Peace-building Initiative. Its objective is to address the unique challenges of societies recovering from conflict. Through this initiative, projects have been undertaken in Guatemala to assist civil society to implement the peace agreements, in Bosnia to promote awareness of the peace accords, in Mozambique to support a programme to exchange weapons for farming tools, and in West Africa to support the initiative led by Mali to promote a West African arms moratorium.

These are small steps, certainly, but constructive ones in working locally to build peace.

Today, I am pleased to release a report entitled "Peace in Progress", which documents the results obtained to date and the wide range of partners with whom we have worked. As the title suggests, Canada intends to carry on with its partners in empowering those working to build peaceful and stable societies in their own countries.

It has been a half-century since a distinguished Canadian international civil servant, John Humphrey, wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then over 60 international human rights instruments have been adopted. Countries have shown a new and welcome willingness to cooperate with the international human rights system.

But we must build on that progress, and one of the most important ways that the Assembly can make its contribution this year is to support a strong United Nations declaration on human rights defenders to protect those who are protecting those whose human rights are being abused.

(spoke in French)

The growing integration of human rights, including women's rights, into all other aspects of United Nations activity is a recent and important breakthrough. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the conditions exist to achieve progress in attaining the goals set out by its drafters. This is good news. However, a review of the human rights situation around the globe makes it painfully clear that we remain far short of these goals.

We need to take advantage of the momentum that this anniversary presents. The United Nations human rights system must be assured of both the political support of the membership and increased regular budget financing if it is to do the job we have entrusted to it.

(spoke in English)

The growth of intra-State conflicts caused by differences of religion, language, race or ethnicity has reinforced the need to protect marginalized groups. To do so, both Governments and civil society must have ready access to information about human rights situations around the world. To this end, Canada has launched for the record an annual report drawn from United Nations sources, which we are making available on the Internet to provide constant updated information concerning human rights around the globe.

Certainly, of those at risk from conflict, none are more at risk than children. The targeting of children in warfare — both as fighters and as victims — is intolerable. The ground-breaking efforts of Graça Machel and the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, merit special and ongoing support.

Enhancing human security also requires establishing legal instruments. The agreement in Rome to establish the International Criminal Court is a major fundamental step towards that goal. This Court will help to deter some of the most serious violations of international humanitarian law. It will help give new meaning and global reach to protecting the vulnerable and the innocent. By isolating and stigmatizing those who commit war crimes or genocide and removing them from the community, it will help end cycles of impunity and retribution. Without justice there is no reconciliation, and without reconciliation there can be no peace.

We need to move forward urgently in making the Court a reality. We should begin during this session of the General Assembly to bring the Court into operation. We who have supported the Court should ratify the Statute as soon as possible. We must also work to understand and address the concerns of those States that remain hesitant about the Court — without diluting its effectiveness. Ultimately, we must ensure that we have an institution that will be credible, responsible and effective.

Respect for civil and political rights is necessary, but in itself is not sufficient to create the conditions for stable societies. Stability also requires economic and social well-being.

Regrettably, statistics show that countries with the lowest income are much more likely to fall victim to violent conflict than others. The number of people whose basic human needs are not being met remains unacceptably and dangerously high. A quarter of the world's people live in severe poverty; more than 800 million face malnutrition; 180 million children under the age of 14 work as child labourers. As the United Nations human development index makes clear this year, the gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to grow.

Countries overburdened by debt are less likely to be developed and more likely to succumb to conflict. Reducing the debt of the least developed nations allows them to devote more resources to basic human needs. That is why at the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Ouagadougou I announced a $20 million contribution to the African Development Bank to support the most heavily indebted African countries. That is also why Canada has forgiven virtually all development-related debt owed to us by the least developed countries — almost $1 billion — and why we encourage others who have not already done so to do likewise.

I think we all recognize that globalization presents opportunities, but it also exposes all of us, especially the most vulnerable, to greater economic and social insecurity. The international financial turmoil of the past months vividly demonstrates the impact these crises can have on the daily lives of the least fortunate. It means that we need to be sensitive to the social consequences of financial volatility. And when crisis strikes, the United Nations and its specialized agencies have a special responsibility to assist those most severely affected.

There is no greater threat to our security than nuclear proliferation. In 1945, Canada, despite the experience of the most destructive war in history, decided to forgo the nuclear option even though, as a participant in the Manhattan Project, we had the technical capability and material capacity to build our own nuclear weapons. In 1968, the Government of Canada confirmed that decision and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Every subsequent Canadian Government has reaffirmed that commitment, and we have spent much diplomatic effort to persuade others that nuclear weapons are the problem, not the solution.

The non-proliferation regime has enhanced everyone's security. The credibility of that regime has been severely tested over the years, but particularly over the past six months. India's and Pakistan's nuclear tests put the entire non-proliferation regime in jeopardy. Nuclear testing undermines the basic goals and objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Testing puts all of us, not least the people of the testing countries themselves, at greater risk. Therefore, there can be no condoning these actions.

And there must be no rewards. We must not legitimize the claims of would-be nuclear Powers, or confer any new status on proliferators. We listened carefully to the presentations of the Presidents of India and of Pakistan this week and we welcome the indications they gave that they would sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. But it is important to reiterate that Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) calls upon India and Pakistan to sign the Treaty without conditions, to participate purposefully in the negotiations on a cut-off treaty on fissile materials, to stop the weaponization of their nuclear programmes, to impose strict export controls on nuclear technology and to embrace fully the non-proliferation regime. We urge them to do so.

In that spirit, we welcome India's and Pakistan's decision to relaunch their dialogue on Kashmir. We also recognize that preventing horizontal proliferation, while crucial, is no more important than preventing vertical proliferation. Nuclear disarmament is the other half of the nuclear bargain. That bargain is a balance of responsibilities and obligations undertaken by nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. Not all nuclear-weapon States have begun to fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the Non-proliferation Treaty, and we call upon them to fulfil their responsibilities.

As we all recognize, this period of globalization multiplies the challenges. It is Canada's conviction that a dynamic, responsive and flexible United Nations system is the best way, perhaps the only way, to meet these challenges.

(*spoke in French*)

To fulfil its leadership responsibilities, the United Nations must be assured of reliable and adequate funding. We cannot revitalize the United Nations so long as Member States, particularly the most wealthy and fortunate among them, contribute less to a system from which they demand more. Renewal can be achieved only if Member States pay their assessed dues, present and past due, on time and without conditions.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me now speak of the Security Council. The Security Council remains at the centre of what the United Nations is all about: protecting against conflict and human risk. However, the Council's legitimacy is increasingly being questioned. To remain credible, the Council must re-examine traditional interpretations of its mandate. The Council needs to broaden its horizons in addressing emerging threats which impact on our security. Thematic debates on these issues, in which all

Member States can participate, are a good step. The addition of peace-building to the Council's range of responses to threats to peace and security is also welcome.

But the Council must also be more willing and more consistent in both how and when it becomes involved. The Council belongs to all Member States. It cannot be allowed to focus on solving the problems of one region and be indifferent to those of others.

The way the Council does its work must be more open and more transparent. For example, Member States involved in and affected by matters before the Council must be allowed to exercise their Charter rights. Far from constraining the Council's efficiency, this will improve the decisions it takes and render its actions more effective. The trend for permanent members increasingly to assume more control over the agenda, thereby marginalizing elected members, runs counter to the democratic principles which so inform our political institutions at the close of the twentieth century. The distinctions between permanent and elected members need to be narrowed rather than widened.

In sum, the Council we need for the next century must be more responsible, more accountable and less impenetrable. We hope that members will support Canada in advancing these aspirations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam.

Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam (Viet Nam) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am convinced that under your wise guidance the work of this session will be crowned with success.

I wish also to express our high appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, for his major contribution during the fifty-second session, which benefited from his effectiveness as President. I warmly congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his active contribution over the past year to the activities of the United Nations and to the reform process.

An eventful year has elapsed since the fifty-second session. While undergoing the intense and unpredictable impact generated by the unprecedented financial and monetary crisis, the world community has had to face tremendous challenges emerging out of tensions and conflicts in many corners of the world, out of policies of hegemony and imposition, and out of social injustice and the growing gap between rich and poor countries. However, peace, stability and cooperation for development continue to mark the prevailing international trend; that trend derives from the age-old aspirations of humankind and, above all, from the pressing demand of all peoples in the face of today's swiftly changing and complex world. That prevailing trend is becoming all the more established in a world context of growing interdependence and of the speedier pace of globalization and regionalization. This situation also presents the international community with as many challenges as opportunities. It must therefore be emphasized that least developed and developing countries are also confronted with considerable challenges, and that the world's development takes place in a context of various closely linked factors that have reciprocal impacts.

In the light of the many important advances that have been made in science and technology, no one can deny the role played by developed countries. But the overall development of the integrated global economy cannot occur without the active participation of developing countries, which account for the majority of the members of the international community.

Globalization is characterized principally by the rapid expansion of trade and economic relations and the swift movement of capital at the international level. We must nevertheless acknowledge that despite the twelve-fold growth in the global volume of trade since the end of the Second World War, the share of developing countries registered just a modest increase while that of least developed countries has been halved in the last two decades and currently stands at 0.4 per cent of the total value of international trade. Since the world's capital moves faster than trade grows, developed countries are the principal beneficiaries of these resources, with the rest going to a limited number of developing countries.

In an environment of economic opening up, characterized by the growing liberalization of trade and investment, developing countries — having undercapitalized industries, less efficient management and dilapidated equipment — have to confront unequal and relentless competition in which absolute superiority is enjoyed by countries that have advanced technologies at their disposal and to multinational corporations whose

revenues are sometimes even higher than the gross national product of some countries. Undoubtedly, this cannot but cause concern to the developing and least developed countries that are beginning their global and regional economic integration.

Additionally, although the current financial and monetary crisis began in East Asia, it is no longer an East Asian phenomenon, but has spread like an oil slick to the rest of the world and now resembles a dangerous storm causing unpredictable losses across many countries in different continents. This illustrates the negative side effects of globalization and provides additional proof of the fact that the greater the rate of globalization, the more interrelated both developed and developing economies become and the more they influence one another.

This situation calls for the international community's programme of action to include mutual cooperation between the developed countries and developing and least developed countries; and among countries that have strong economies, international institutions and the countries in crisis. It is only through this basic approach of mutual assistance that developing countries and countries in crisis will have an opportunity to join in the efforts of the developed countries to overcome the problems and make the global economy's growth more stable, which in the long run will benefit everyone. Obviously, such cooperation and mutual assistance must be based on mutual interest and respect. It can certainly be said that in a situation of generalized crisis, going to someone else's aid means saving oneself.

We believe that in adopting this approach, developing countries and countries in crisis should fully exploit their own domestic strengths and mobilize their existing potential to speed up and take advantage of international aid and cooperation. As far as external aid is concerned, we believe that the individual conditions of each recipient country should be taken into account in order to avoid the imposition of any remedy that might worsen its situation and cause unforeseen effects to social stability. Furthermore, we are convinced that in implementing these measures to stimulate liberalization, attention should be paid to the diversity of the global economy, as well as to the heterogeneous nature of national and regional economies. This is the only approach capable of ensuring the efficiency of our cooperation, the beneficial quality of our ties and our common prosperity.

In this light, we would like to express the following hopes.

More than ever, developed countries should facilitate access to their markets, accord most-favoured-nation status to developing countries — especially those countries which have been ravaged by the crisis or are suffering from its consequences — and include them in the Generalized System of Preferences. They should also support developing and least developed countries.

It is more necessary than ever to maintain the level of official development assistance. This is not only necessary to halt the downward trend, but also for donor countries to seek to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product devoted to development by donor countries. Moreover, this assistance is considered important for developing countries because it allows them to strengthen their energy resources and contributes to building both their economic and social infrastructures, elements which are essential for development and in order to attract foreign investments.

The role of multilateral institutions — particularly that of the United Nations — is very important in resolving the long- and short-term problems of developing nations. However, it is regrettable that United Nations assistance to developing countries is continuing to decline. We therefore welcome the adoption of measures by the United Nations to improve the quality of its development cooperation, as well as the initiative of the Secretary-General to create a Development Account using the savings realized from reductions in administrative costs.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), along with other international organizations and bilateral and multilateral donors, is currently working to find solutions to the urgent problems of developing and least developed countries. Viet Nam has in recent years benefited from their considerable assistance, which ranged from restructuring the economy into a market economy to specific activities in different areas of society, particularly in the battle to eliminate famine and reduce poverty.

More recently, the effective support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the implementation of a tripartite agricultural cooperation mechanism agreed among FAO itself, Viet Nam and certain African countries has yielded encouraging results. We hope that on the basis of that experience, the United Nations will focus more on development issues and create conditions that are more

favourable for providing assistance to the developing and less developed countries.

In recent years, we have witnessed the formation and expansion of linkages among countries at the regional, interregional, intercontinental and global levels. These multi-level linkages among States also give rise to favourable conditions for all nations to exploit their comparative advantages, and they give impetus to increased mutual assistance among various partners, which leads to more equitable and sustainable growth within each region as well as among regions.

Peace, stability and development are closely interrelated, like companions on the road to prosperity. Our own experience has taught us that a peaceful environment and political and social stability are indispensable for a nation to devote itself to achieving economic development. In turn, a more developed economy and improved living standards help strengthen political and social stability and thus preserve peace.

Two opposing tendencies have characterized the world security situation since the fifty-second session. On the one hand, numerous events have shown a continuing trend of peace and improved relations among countries, as evidenced by fact that the peaceful settlement of certain decades-long conflicts is under way and that relations among nations, including major Powers, continue to improve. On the other hand, we are witnessing on a daily basis bloodshed and confrontation in many regions, from the Middle East to Africa, from the Balkans to South Asia, and so on.

The arms race continues unabated. One terrorist act follows on the heels of another. The list of countries to be "punished" is not getting any shorter, and the direct victims continue to be the elderly and women and children. Our planet is thus not yet out of the reach of the Damocles sword of insecurity.

The painful lessons of the twentieth century — a century replete with conflicts and wars, including the two World Wars, which claimed tens of millions of lives — and the burning desire of humankind for a better life on the eve of the new century require that we all redouble our efforts to achieve a solid and lasting peace.

In today's world, such a peace will be achieved only if every people and every State — large or small, rich or poor, wherever its location — make every effort in jointly working towards it. Such a peace can be achieved only if it is based on a strict observance in international relations of the principle of respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-intervention in one another's internal affairs; the non-use or threat of use of force; and sanctions.

Such a peace will be established only when the goal of total disarmament is achieved, first and foremost through the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. In this spirit, all States must put an end to the production, testing, stockpiling, proliferation, use or threat of use of these weapons.

South-East Asia, as an integral part of the planet, is affected by current global developments. In these last 50 years, it has been a hotbed of conflicts and disputes and the scene of numerous bloody wars and crises. But today South-East Asia's luck is changing, and an atmosphere of peace, stability and cooperation for development prevails.

The membership of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has increased, bringing it closer to its goal of 10 member countries and helping to put an end to the region's historical divisions. The South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty has been signed. Nevertheless, problems remain, including sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, that must be resolved in order to ensure peace and stability for all countries in the region. We believe, however, that tensions can be avoided if all parties concerned practise self-restraint; refrain from aggravating the situation; ensure freedom of international maritime transportation; settle their disputes through negotiation on the 'basis of respect for international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and, in the immediate future, seek to identify patterns of cooperation acceptable to all sides. This is in line with the all-out efforts by the countries of the region to build neighbourly relationships of friendship and cooperation based on the principle of mutual respect.

In this spirit, as Cambodia's immediate neighbour, we welcome the success beyond expectations of the Cambodian elections last July, which were recognized to be free and fair by the entire international community. We sincerely hope that this will lead to the early formation of a new government in Cambodia that will set the Cambodian people on the road to building and developing their country in conditions of peace and stability.

Regrettably, East Asia in general and South-East Asia in particular, reputed in past decades to be the world's most dynamic economic growth area, are suffering an unprecedentedly serious crisis. This has led certain people hastily to declare the demise of the miracle of the East Asian development model and even go so far as to reject "Asian values". I would humbly suggest that such views are groundless. Indeed, the current crisis in East Asia is neither the first nor the last in the history of the market economy. Although some errors were made, the East Asia and South-East Asia development model has already provided quite a few valuable experiences and useful lessons.

Are not the virtues of studiousness, industriousness, thrift, intelligence, creativity and caring for one another eternal and universal values? Moreover, there remain substantial economic foundations, unique cultures and the achievements of the people of the region realized thanks to their hard work and creativity — not to mention other positive factors, such as the region's abundant natural resources, large internal market and major role in world politics and economics.

The existence and growth of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been another positive factor in the development of South-East Asia. Despite difficulties and challenges, ASEAN continues to become more unified, promote cooperation and play an active role in Asia and the Pacific and the world, not only through intensive interactions with dialogue partners and other international and regional organizations, but also by means of its vigorous work in different multilateral forums: the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia/Europe Meeting, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations itself.

After successfully hosting the seventh summit of the French-speaking community in November 1997, Viet Nam has the great honour to again play host — this time to the sixth ASEAN Summit, which will be held in Hanoi this December. The Summit, whose theme will be strengthening unity and broadening cooperation for a South-East Asia of peace, stability and balanced development, will adopt the Hanoi declaration and plan of action, which will guide South-East Asia as it enters the next century.

As a result of the factors I have outlined, we are firmly convinced that South-East Asia will soon overcome its difficulties and regain its previous pace of growth, and that the international community will continue to regard the region as a promising and reliable partner.

To build peace and promote development, it is urgently important to reform the United Nations, to make it more democratic and better adapted to confront the profound changes that have taken place in the world in the 50 years since the Organization was founded. We all agree that it is essential to reform the Security Council so that it will be more democratic, more transparent and more accountable to the General Assembly, the biggest and most representative forum of the community of nations. Viet Nam and its Non-Aligned Movement partners are committed to the position that the developing countries should be represented in the Security Council through permanent membership. In view of the legitimate interests of potential candidates, Viet Nam will support the rotation formula if a majority of countries accept it. Our country also supports the proposed limiting of the right of the veto — prior to abolishing it — to decisions relating to issues provided for under Chapter VII of the Charter.

This year the international community will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We have always regarded the Declaration as a great achievement of the world's peoples in their long struggle for fundamental rights, the most important of which are the right to live in peace, independence, prosperity and happiness, and with social justice, and the right to self-determination. It is unfortunate that the issue of human rights has sometimes been twisted to serve as a pretext for intervening and interfering in other countries' affairs. In this regard, Viet Nam greatly appreciates the position the Non-Aligned Movement expressed in the Durban Declaration, during its recent twelfth summit meeting, that human rights should not

> "be used as a political instrument for interference in internal affairs. ... They require an environment of peace and development, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Socio-economic rights, including the right to development, are inextricably part of real human rights."

Having suffered humiliation under foreign domination, having been ridiculed and having sacrificed innumerable lives in order to regain their human rights and dignity, our people will spare no effort to hold on to the fundamental rights they have regained.

To achieve the objective of becoming a prosperous people, a strong State and a just and developed society, the Vietnamese people are, and will remain, resolved to pursue their policy of renewal and to industrialize and modernize the country. To do this and promote peace, cooperation and development, Viet Nam will continue to pursue its foreign policy in support of independence, sovereignty, openness, multilateralism, diversification of foreign relations, and gradual global and regional integration. Thus Viet Nam will always be an active member of international and regional organizations. It will continue to contribute to the United Nations efforts for peace and development, particularly in its capacity as a newly elected member of the Economic and Social Council.

Humanity enters the new millennium with earnest hopes for a better and more prosperous life. At this historic turning point, we expect the United Nations to make greater efforts to achieve lasting peace and a climate of international cooperation supportive of the development of every nation. Viet Nam will spare no effort to contribute fully to the achievement of that lofty goal.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Indrek Tarand, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia.

Mr. Tarand (Estonia): Please allow me to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on your election to preside over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I wish you all the best in carrying out your duties. Let me also express my appreciation for his excellent work to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

As of today 462 days remain until the end of this century — a century which has recorded many phases in the development of the world. There have been times of confrontation and times of partnership, times of protectiveness and times of openness.

Seven years ago the walls of separation between the nations of East and West were torn down, creating opportunities for closer cooperation and economic integration. This also opened doors for nations to promote general welfare, mutual understanding and respect and the building of trust and confidence in one another.

As has been said about this moment in history, it is not so much that the borders between States are now open and can be freely crossed, but that they can be transcended. Distances and borders now have limited significance; the globe has become a universal village in its own right.

Today, the world economy appears to be sliding into a deep crisis. The countries that are suffering the most are the poorest. While I realize that globalization entails risks and challenges for economies and societies, I am convinced that there is no alternative. The only credible formula for a viable global economy is the promotion of freer trade through the abolition of trade barriers and the pursuit of sustained economic and democratic reform. Once starting on this path of reform, as difficult as it may be, there can be no stepping aside for shortsighted political consideration. Estonia's success is living proof of this.

Along with many other States, Estonia began its transition from a Communist regime to democracy and from a State-controlled economy to a free market in 1991. By 1997, Estonia had the highest economic growth rate in Europe, and preliminary figures for 1998 indicate that growth continues to be strong. Estonia's inclusion among the six countries to begin accession negotiations with the European Union is a recognition of its achievements in building a civil society and a well-functioning market economy.

In my country, we are proud of the European Union invitation. We regard the European integration process as among the most challenging yet most rewarding endeavours for our continent, today and in the distant future. European integration is not simply an effort to provide our citizens with the tools for success in a globalizing world; it is also a catalyst for greater openness throughout the continent. We are convinced that pursuing membership is in itself a strong guarantee for stable development, as it provides all applicants with a viable road map to reform.

Estonia greatly appreciates the help provided by the United Nations, other international organizations and a number of bilateral donors during the difficult early years of transition. Now that Estonia has entered into the post-transitional stage of its development, we believe it is time to start paying back. During the last eight years our Government and people have accumulated a wealth of experience and know-how on transition to a market democracy. We want to share this knowledge with countries at an early stage of their reforms, starting from building up a well-functioning border guard and finishing with successful monetary reform. Learning how to teach

and provide support is the final lesson before graduation, and this should be the goal of every reform country.

At any one time, there are 15 or 16 armed conflicts from around the world on the Security Council's agenda. Conflicts between and within States spread from Europe to Africa, from the Middle East to Asia. These conflicts are often driven by poor socio-economic conditions or ethnic nationalism. Estonia, recognizing the primary role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, supports efforts to maintain and strengthen the Organization's capacity to organize and effectively conduct its peacekeeping operations. In addition, we trust that the phasing out of gratis personnel, as mandated by the General Assembly, if handled properly, will not adversely affect the functioning of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

As a contributor of personnel, Estonia is committed to continuous participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are preparing to dispatch the joint Estonian-Latvian-Lithuanian battalion known as BALTBAT for its inaugural tour of duty in the near future. I would like to extend our thanks to all nations which have supported the establishment and formation of BALTBAT.

Estonia also intends to continue its involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF). As a conflict prevention measure, it welcomes and supports the enhanced cooperation of the United Nations with regional organizations or arrangements. In particular, deeper cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has great potential.

This year has already provided the international community with a number of landmark events. Among notable achievements were the twentieth special session, on the reduction and prevention of the illicit production, sale and demand of narcotic substances, and the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Estonia trusts that this fifty-third session of the General Assembly will reinforce the momentum captured in June and July in both New York and Rome, respectively.

On the other hand, the world community has witnessed a number of vicious terrorist attacks. It is time for everybody to understand a basic fact: terrorism is not politics; it is not religion — it is murder. Estonia deplores all terrorist activities wherever they occur, whatever the form or manifestation. We sympathize with all nations that have suffered these acts and call for even stronger solidarity to fight against such attacks.

We also must acknowledge that even on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the major accomplishments of our Organization, the world is still home to gross violations of human rights on all six continents. We therefore call for a sustained effort of the General Assembly, in close cooperation with regional organizations, to address this issue and to find the most effective mechanisms for early warning to identify and stop these violations.

Finally, a few words concerning the United Nations reform. We support reform based on the proposals by the Secretary-General. Estonia strongly believes that the aim of this reform must be to come to grips with a changing world as well as the principle of cost-effectiveness.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.